

**LOVE LETTERS OF THE BACHELOR  
POET, JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY TO  
MISS ELIZABETH KAHLE, NOW FIRST  
PRINTED FROM THE ORIGINALS  
WITH NUMEROUS FACSIMILES**

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Love letters of the bachelor poet, James Whitcomb Riley to Miss Elizabeth Kahle, now first printed from the originals with numerous facsimiles by James Whitcomb Riley

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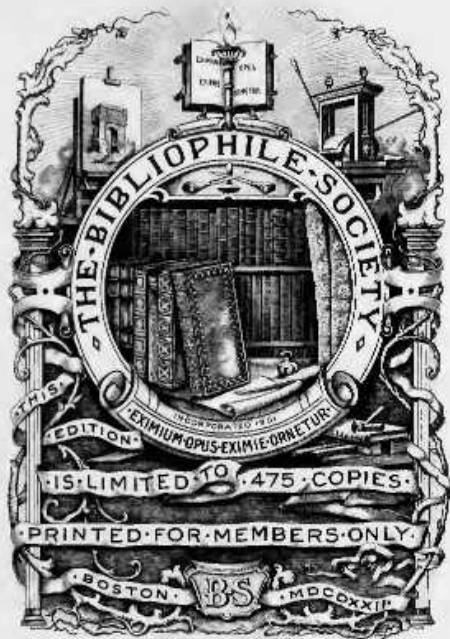
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## FOREWORD

It has been observed that an author seldom appears at his best in writing love letters, for such tender missives do not generally arouse much enthusiasm in any one but the individual to whom they are addressed, — not excepting the author himself, who in the calmer moments of disenchantment is apt to marvel at his own unguarded effusiveness. The love letters of Robert Browning afford one of the rare exceptions to this rule, and the present group of letters written by James Whitcomb Riley to Miss Elizabeth Kahle, of New Brighton, Pa., are unquestionably the most noble — as they are also the most self-revealing — utterances that ever fell from his pen.

An author of either prose or verse may reveal but little of self in his published works, but in these unconventional autograph letters the popular American Poet discloses the innermost recesses of his

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nature in a light that will greatly enhance the admiration of even his most devoted adherents. They will likewise be of almost equal interest to those who know their author only by name. In fact, had they been written by an unknown hand they would be no less entitled to a permanent place in our literature.

Although these letters were intended for no other eyes than those of the one to whom they were written, the bond of privacy has been loosed, since their recipient has voluntarily disposed of them with the full understanding that they are to be given to the world, and with the feeling that they will afford a better appreciation of the true character of their author. The correspondence having begun and continued for upwards of three years before they met, her profound and lasting regard for him was fostered largely by these intimate letters, and she desires now in her latter days that the medium through which she came so closely in touch with the human qualities of his heart and soul be imparted to others in order that they, too, may know and esteem

his personal traits, as they already know and admire the fruits of his genius.

Owing to the fact that the young lady was an entire stranger to Riley at the commencement, he felt it necessary at first to write much about himself, which happily he did. In one of the early letters — that of February 21, 1879 — he says: "I recognize the fact that you know nothing of my history, my character, social position and all that, — perhaps don't care to, yet I believe it a duty that I owe both to you and to myself at this juncture, to assure you of the fact that I am a young man and unmarried. I write sentimental verses occasionally, simply because I don't believe in love and am anxious to convince myself of my error, possibly — I don't know why else. I have many friends, but more enemies, and can scarcely tell which I most enjoy — for I really enjoy being hated by some people. I am cynical in a marked degree, and disagreeable at times, I most frankly admit. Socially I move in the best circles, — not, perhaps, because I was 'to the manor born,' but because— because— well, I recite dialectic